

K.T.

K.T. Why don't we start with what's happening now. Do you have any specific projects?

G.S. Yes, I have. For the conference. I'm working on a theme of pairs of photographs. They are portraits, black and white portraits of people in their home or studio, in their interior; then a colour photograph of the interior itself. However the person isn't photographed in front of the same background. So there's not really a repetition. What I am trying to have is a visual reference or an indication somewhere on the edge of the photograph that it is the same interior. That the person belongs to that interior. And then in the colour photograph, you have the same visual reference on one edge of the photograph. It's something that developed slowly. I always loved to do portraits and I love interiors. Color photography for years I just didn't know what to do with it. It always interested me. I saw that many photographers could handle it; others couldn't, I think they missed out completely. So I was thinking how I could combine both and get the best out of both. So I decided that..I don't like colour portraits, so I thought that I'd do the portraits in black and white and the interiors in colour. And I hope.. I'm really just trying it. I have to see what it looks like I want other people's reactions. I think that one could sort of reinforce the other. You know a black and white portrait next to a colour interior; is such a juxtaposition. Not only the subject is very different, but because one is colour and another is black and white is another set of contrasts and it might work. I hope it will work.

K.T. In one sense, surely it will bring to light the illusion in black and white. In one situation you have a colour image and in the other you see those colours transferred into tones.

G.S. The reason why I decided to do the interiors in colour,, because I feel that the colours we use around ourselves somehow in some way describe certain cultures, or social class or taste and I think it can be important. When

(1) I first started doing colour interiors,...I don't know if you saw the exhibition at Yajima,; there were 7 or 8 colour interiors - I started doing photographs of colour interiors which were really very colourful, what you could call kitschy. I wouldn't decorate my home like that. In a way I like that. These people were really very nice ordinary people and just by talking with the people it doesn't necessarily make you connect them with that kind of interior. But anyway this is what I photographed. But since then I realized that an interior which has very few colours or no colours at all can be just as significant as a very colourful one. Because if you look around here and sort of the people we know, like earthy colours. Not terribly imaginative, all browns and blacks and beiges. And green plants. It's all in one half of the colour circle. But there are other uses of colour and you know, chartered accountants use certain colours and company presidents use other colours.

K.T. One thing in a sense that has always upset me about the work that has been done in colour photography, is that attention isn't paid to colour. It's paid to colour in the sense that I see that building there. It's flashy orange. I'm going to photograph that because it'll look good in colour, not necessarily attention to colour.

G.S. No, I think that is the way an artist, a painter or a graphic artist would use colour. I think Szarkowski explained it very well in the introduction to the Eggleston book where he said that photographers didn't see the blue and the sky as one thing. For them, in the early ages of colour photography, 5, 6 years ago, the blue was a colour patch which had to be juxtaposed with say an orange or complimentary colour and they failed to recognize that the blue and the sky is the same thing. That they are one thing. It's just that the sky is blue; if it was accepted that it could be pink, it's alright too.

K.T. I was at Yajima yesterday and I went through the portfolio that you have there. And one of the things that struck me is that there are so many references or say there is such a rapport with say, Walker Evans. There's the interior and the implication that given the surroundings, you know something about the person, that a



person inhabits it even though they may not be present in the picture; the exteriors in Abitibi, the fine tone quality of the prints; work with large format and so on.

G.S. I think your observations are accurate. I was always very much influenced by Walker Evans. And in my portraits, my earlier portraits - I don't think I had any at Yajima now - I was.. and you, know, I'm not embarrassed about it .. that I was influenced by other photographers. Paul Strand in my earlier portrait work. A very frontal approach especially with the Outer Hebrides book. But I feel that more Walker Evans style of work in documenting things, many different things because he had a very wide range of interests are very close to mine.

K.T. In the work that is at Yajima, most of the photographs are of sort of small town environments. Is that done because you see small towns as representing some sort of fabric of life here? Or is it just by chance.

(2) G.S. Well, not completely by chance. In the last ten years I've been photographing almost exclusively in rural Quebec. Of course what we see is farmers, landscapes, villages, and small towns. Landscapes as such in themselves, photographically have never interested me. I love landscapes and I love hiking in the landscape. But somehow, as much as I love other photographers landscapes, I just don't feel like photographing it. Maybe it's because I need traces of man. Traces of man interest me very much, whether it's in architecture or interiors or just a street or signs. There has to be some connection between nature and man and maybe that's why I photograph in small towns.

K.T. But why not then urban Quebec as well?

G.S. Well true. Did I have at Yajima the St. Catherine Street things?

K.T. I didn't see them.

G.S. No. Well, if you remember at Yajima it was in the hallways. ~~xxxx~~ I'm working in Montreal now.

K.T. Is there a switch in the work as a result of it

G.S. Yes, I think the photographs are a bit more hermetic. At least the St. Catherine photos, when I look at them now and compare them with the rural ones, they are a bit claustrophobic. So in that sense, they probably do express the city as opposed to the country. Also I'm finding that it's quite difficult to establish contact in rural Quebec; it's getting more and more difficult. Somehow, rural areas that hadn't been exposed to city traffic, the travelling salesman and all that, they were very open to the odd city dweller. But now it's getting more and more difficult. I also think that I'm more of an urban person; I've always lived in the city and I like cities. So I thought that maybe I should start working for a few years in the city - an environment that we know the best. And I know so many people so that when it comes to portraits and interiors, it's very easy for me to find subject matter. In the country it sometimes takes a few days to meet one person.

K. T. That's a what I was going to ask you. The people that you photograph, the portraits that you do, I imagine that for the rural ones, you somehow meet these people, befriend them and then photograph them. Were they aware that the photographs would possibly be exhibited or published? And if so, what was their response to that?

G.S. Yes, in most of the cases they were. If we had a long enough conversation and if they asked me, I would tell them that I am a photographer who exhibits and maybe even sell one or two. If they didn't ask me I wouldn't necessarily tell them; but most of them had no objection. Once it got to the point where they agreed to be photographed, they didn't really care what I did with the picture. One thing, I always sent photographs or there were a few trips where I worked with a 4 x 5 only and had a polaroid back, so I made a 4 x 5 polaroid. And I got small mats, instead of just handing them a loose polaroid, it just looked so much better. But I find that it is very important that the photographer give prints to the person being photographed. You know, I can always take a photograph and take it home and take it out and look at the person whenever I want, but he can't look at me. So at least I've shared the experience with him in form of sending - if he has a copy and I have a copy, I find



it's important.]

K.T. No, I agree with you. In a way it's also a matter of respect for the person. Do you always do things in terms of projects, like in terms of this current one where you have the portraits in interiors and then the colour interiors. Or do you often just go out and shoot in the streets.

G.S. Well, yess, both. I do have projects and strangely enough they always come up every three years and this is purely a coincidence. So much that if the next one comes in three years, I will ask myself questions because it is so curious. I like to carry my small Minox and leica with me most of the time and I would just use the 35 as a sketching tool. Most of the photos I take like this, you know rollo after rollo might have nothing on it, but I still feel like doing it. But also I would, depending on the disposition, the environment I'm in and the weather, I would go out for a day with my 35 and just walk around for the day and photograph very consciously. But in a much looser way than with a 2 1/4 or a 4x5.

K.T. But the work that you do with the 35, do you consider it to be merely sketches or does it become part of your quote "serious" work?

G.S. It becomes part of my serious work - not so much in terms of showing it, though I'm planning to print up some of the work I've done in 35 in the last several years - I haven't printed much of that. But it helps me in sort of loosening up in my 4x5 work. You know, with 35 you work very fast you hardly look in the camera and all sorts of interesting things happen in composition. From that I learnt, for instance, that just because your camera is on a tripod and just because it's a 4x5, there is no reason why you shouldn't tilt it slightly, because sometimes a tilted corner either because you get a horizon line or if you are indoors, you get a sort of diagonal or triangular shape at the edges and that type of composition can make your photograph more dynamic, more interesting. And that I learnt from a 35. Because naturally your reaction if the camera is on the tripod and there are spirit levels on it then everything has to be straight, which isn't true. So in that sense my 35 mm work is closely connected to my 4x5 work.]

K.T. But I would think that because working with a 4x5 is so different, it's so much more ritualistic that the nature of the image is always going

to be different from the 35. There are things that you can incorporate, there are ways of loosening up, but they are still two different entities. The same can be seen in the reverse where a 4x5 might influence a 35 mm.

G.S. Ya, well you're not going to play this tape anyways. It's just for yourself.

K.T. Most of it.

G.S. No. I'm just trying to say that Allan Comiter ( talking about Comiter using 35 influenced by 4x5)

K.T. This is going back a few years, but I think you were a member of GAP.

G.S. Yes, that was the beginning of the '70's. It lasted about 2 years. The GAP was formed by four young photographers and they asked Pierre Gaudard and myself to join them. And it was an interesting collaboration for 2 years. Reacting back and forth. I think that one of the reasons that it didn't wrk out on my part was that I was always ~~very~~ socially very conscious but I never was very political. And some of the members in Gap were vey political, though we never had any heavy discussions. As a matter of fact we didn't ever talk on politics, it was mostly social and human condtions, we talked about, which can of course be very closely connected to politics, but not necessarily. Because there are poor and rich people in every society. Anyways I was never, I am a fairly apolitical person. So in my photography when I photograph people in various kinds of environments which, in a way, has to do with society, which, in a way, is a very social kind of photography, it's so quiet. I wasn't trying to change things.

K.T. Do you think that photographic work can be a catalyst for changing things?

G.S. Very seldom. It can happen in photography. But I think that video and film are more powerful to ..especially now video.

K.T. Because of the word image relationship?

G.S. Word/image, commentary and because of the immediacy. It can be spread over the world in a matter of an hour. But we all know if you



that the photographer if collaborating with other agencies can accomplish something. But it didn't happen very often.

K.T. My opinion on that is that photography doesn't change anything. It's the people who do. It may serve as evidence of something, but whose people must activate other people in order to change something. That's how the action occurs.

G.S. Right. There was Riis with Mulberry Bend and there was Hine with the child labor. And I don't know about the FSA. Did anything happen there besides documenting and building up a really fantastic file.

K.T. I think there were some subsidies given, things like mortgages were held back so that people didn't have to pay them right away - I can't think of the legal term right now. And there were subsidies given because of the views of the living conditions that were seen, plus information that was available.

G.S. I tend to agree with you that photography doesn't change anything.

K.T. Pierre Gaudard mentioned that there was one project that came out of GAP - the small, les petits commercants.

G.S. Ya, the small shopkeepers. Yes well it was I think a worthwhile project.

K.T. where was it exhibited?

G.S. It was exhibited at COOPRIX which was a cooperative supermarket up on St. Joseph Blvd. St. Joseph. And it's a very large supermarket and a lot of people go there. It was shown in a sort of cafeteria near the tables and people were really looking at the photographs. And each of us selected 1 or 2 or 3, just small in this case. One of my photographs was a guy who makes violins. A company which produces neon signs, but just small in this case, naturally. And what else, I can't remember. I photographed 4 or 5 petits commercants and took 3 of them.

K.T. As I understand it was some sort of collaborative effort, or collective effort.

G.S. In the sense that the whole thing was planned together. We had meetings where we worked out what

sort of shops what sort of industries we would include. And then we shared the expenses, printing mounting, whatever expenses were involved, framing.

K.T. Is that the one and only collaborative project that you worked on?

G.S. Yes, it was. The rest of the collaboration was just meetings. And we also sent portfolios to different magazines, trying to show our work. Some were published in Vie des Arts. We sent some to Camera in Switzerland. And about the year later I got a letter saying they wanted to publish some of my photographs and not the others. I found it a little embarrassing because I probably wasn't the initiator of sending to camera. What happened Allan Porter had a specific theme called Inhabitant and my photographs were of Iles aux Coudres, Charlevoix in that project. But it had nothing to do with gap.

K.T. Do you do any freelance work?

G.S. Yes, I've specialized for almost 18, 20 years in photographing paintings, reproductions of works of art. And I work for museums, galleries National Gallery, for individual artists and commercial galleries. I do painting, sculpture, graphic work and sometimes architecture. For Time Canada, while it was still out, I did quite a bit of work for time.

K.T. Of that nature.

G.S. Well architecture and reportages on artists, painting and there were a few other just ordinary reportages. I sort of... it's not very exciting work but it's very specialized. There are only two or three photographers in Montreal who do this. And there is enough demand to live on it only.

K.T. Is that how you started?

G.S. No I started to work for the Provincial Government at Office du Film de Quebec for 13 years. And in 1970 I quit them, because I had proposed different projects; I wanted to do several things that they weren't interested in. It got to be very dull whereas before it was very interesting. I travelled a lot. So anyways, I quit and I switched over to teaching at the CEGEP. Which I have been doing now for almost 8 yrs.



Some teaching, I do also freelancing, paintings,  
And try to find enough time to do my own work.  
(about Bravo exhibition in N.Y.)

K.T. There has been a lot of documentary work  
done in Quebec. It seems to me that it is  
almost centralized here in terms of the rest of  
the country. Some of it is good, some is bad.  
A lot of it is dull. Which upsets me a lot  
because ~~when it is used well it is very~~  
~~instructive~~ I think that it is a very fine form  
which can be very instructive, open peoples  
eyes when it is used well. When it is used  
badly it can negate ... Do you see the fact  
that documentary is centered in Quebec coming  
from any specific positions. Why should it be  
centered here as opposed to out west?

G.S. My first reaction would be because of..  
you know there are more problems here politically,  
always been. No, it's not always true. If we look  
at good documentary work, as you mentioned,  
like Pierre Gaudard's Prisons and Workers.  
Pierre's a Frenchman who has been living here  
for many years. He isn't so much a Quebecois  
who would be concerned so much at heart with  
social political issues. Well, I'm not a  
Quebecer either and I have been working in  
rural Quebec. I don't really know of any other  
photographer who has been working as extensively  
in rural Quebec. Sure there are a lot of  
photographers who spend a few months here. But  
I really don't know, unless it's French Canadians  
being really Latin people, closer to European,  
French ties, where in Europe the most popular  
form is photo-journalism, the reportage type of  
approach. So maybe it's a question of temperament.  
I don't know...

K.T. Sure it was (a popular form) in the  
thirties. I don't think it is as widely spread  
now as it was then, because there ..so many  
people are experimenting with other means -  
conceptual work, studio set-up situations,  
like Cummings work. So it seems to decrease the  
emphasis on documentary because before all these  
other things were not happening as much.

G.S. You know, you mentioned Quebec. Out in  
Saskatoon, at the Photographers Gallery, they  
do quite a bit of documentary work. It's not  
the real social documentary, but it is definitely

documentary...But really I couldn't tell you. That might be an interesting research for a student in the history of photography. Or for yourself to actually go around and ask photographers why do you do social documentary. I really couldn't answer. Did you see this last publication of OVO, this Drummondville thing?

K.T. Which is another example.

G.S. What do you think of that thing?

K.T. I actually went through it to see who photographed ~~what~~ what. I liked Norman Rajotte's photographs a lot. I think that the publication could have been tighter. Sure it should be considered as a whole book because that way you get a more circular view of Drummondville. And so there are some pictures which are used as transitions or just fillers because that ~~way~~ related to the event.

G.S. I found the pictures really quite weak or at least they ~~dn't~~ do very much. The whole thing is really very uneven. Even the printing which is apparently duotone and they could have really done a lot better. I saw the original prints exhibited at the book fair at Place Bonaventure and they were quite good actually. But it's another example of documentary work here.

K.T. What about your relation to other uses of photography, say conceptual work?

G.S. I really enjoy when an artist uses photography in an unusual or inventive way, conceptual or other. I especially like the ones that are treated in a certain...well not necessarily sense of humour, but where there is some esprit, some originality or inventiveness. A lot of it I find very uninteresting or at least I can't tune in at that particular level. But certain artists or photographers who work in a conceptual way, I like very much; others I just don't understand. Like I like what Bill Vazan is doing.

K.T. But you're never tempted to try and incorporate it into your own work?

G.S. No, Sometimes I was thinking in terms of sequences, but somehow, I don't know, my brain doesn't work like that. You know I don't necessarily. But I still like to about every three years, as



I mentioned work on a theme., where the body of work says something about the subject matter, where the individual photographs are just as important as the whole. But to work in terms of sequences or conceptual work I never did it. Maybe it's something that comes like colour, where it bugged me for a time but I just didn't know how to approach it. But I have sort of sympathy towards conceptual work that is well done. I think some of it is really ~~good~~. poor. And too fussy. There's not much meat in it.

K.T. I agree with you. I think sometimes the process is revered as process as opposed to content And if the content is nothing then...

G.S. You know as soon as you exhaust the surface quality of it then there is nothing more left.

K.T. In the projects we were just talking about, you talk about conceiving a project where the individual photographs are as important as the whole. Do you organize the photographs in say an exhibition, do you organize them in a specific sequence? Or is that left up to someone else

G.S. I like to work with someone else.. with the gallery.. whoever is responsible for the hanging. I wouldn't want to do it completely alone either. Because you probably get the same reaction, because by the time you made the photographs, you did proofs and dozens or hundreds of proof prints and then you print up your proof prints, and then you look at them, you're so much involved with your images that you fail to see certain possibilities in juxtapositions.. you know, how one image, how two or three images might gain from each other by being side by side. In that case I like to work with other people when it comes to hanging. But since my photographs aren't conceived sequentially when I take them, I am open to different types of arrangements. But I wouldn't like to give my pile of photographs to someone and just say Hang them...Even if I, which happened, I sent a group of photographs to Milan and I gave them an indication of different arrangements. of certain possibilities and I explained why I would like to have such and such photographs hung in a group at least close together. But I didn't leave them completely open to do whatever they wanted to do.

K.T. And did they follow your instructions?

G.S. I don't know !

K.T. Is your wrk relatively well known in the rest of Canada?

G.S. I think so

K.T. What about Europe?

G.S. No not really.

K.T. The States?

G.S. No. When it comes to my wrk I'm not pushing a lot. And I know that..well you don't have to be pushy, but I think that any artist or photographer should be active in distributing his own work. I'll wait til I finish the work I'm doing and then I'll go around. But I always feel that the work I've done, you know I've lost interest in showing it .  
...END



GABOR SZILASI

CU St. Catherine Theatre  
Denyse Pelletier

• • Depuis vingt ans, Gabor Szilasi a retracé

l'environnement intérieur et extérieur des villes

et villages du Québec. De l'Abitibi, de l'Île aux Coudres et de la Beauce jusqu'à Ste Catherine à Montréal, de restaurant Texan, à l'édifice de la Canada Cement et à la boutique de Bombay, nous associons la présence humaine aux intérieurs habités par la télévision et aux extérieurs éclairés par le clignotement des néons.

Supersexe Ste. Catherine

• • ~~Dans la photo~~ C'est pare le cadrage que l'on voit le soin qui est apporté à ceci, puisque l'ordre se révèle par le choix attentif des détails. Dans la photo de Supersexe Palace Theatre, les parties des deux bâtiments se devisent l'image, et, de cette façon, établissent une comparaison. La façade ondulée de Supersexe partage également l'image avec les colonnes néo-classiques du cinéma Palace; des femmes fluorescentes, font concurrence au film Escape from Alcatraz et à sa vedette Clint Eastwood. Les détails absurdes abondent.

Abitibi Abitibi

Dans les photos en noir et blanc de la rue Ste. Catherine ce sont les qualités de surface qui sont mises en valeur; dans les suivantes, celles de l'Abitibi, le choix et la combinaison des couleurs révèlent le goût de la culture. Chaque photo de cette série est prise dans la même position et à la même distance afin de minimiser des changements d'espace et de temps et d'accentuer les modifications de la forme architecturale et de la couleur. Elles font connaître une sensibilité qui est particulière au Québec rural.

Blank Intérieur

• • Au début des années soixante dix, les intérieurs et les portraits représentaient deux facettes particulières et distinctes de l'œuvre documentaire de Szilasi. Les intérieurs font toujours référence aux habitants et les personnes sont toujours photographiées dans leur environnement; ou comme dit Gabor Szilasi:

Mme Tremblay

• "My two main interests in photography were always people and interiors. It was always important for me whether it was architecture or landscape to photograph where I could discover a trace of man.

Old nun Intérieur

• • It is very important for me that they are not well known personalities. I don't want to rely on the reputation of the person because he or she is well known. I enjoy photographing ordinary people but people who still have a strong character, people who have presence.

Balnk Mr. Pasztor

- • In the early seventies, interiors and portraits were two individual and separate facets of your work. In the later seventies you choose to integrate the black and white portraits and the colour interiors. Why did you make this choice?

couple

Scott Wright

Andrea

- Because by using colours in the interiors, I'm adding another set of information to an otherwise black and white phtoograph and that is important in the case of interiors because it tells so much about personal taste, about social situations, about cultural values. • In the case of a portrait I'm quite happy with a black and white portrait because of its abstract quality. And by using both black and white and colour, the statement about the person and his or her interior comes across in a more significant way. The two somehow complement each other. • If you look at the black and white portrait and the colour interior we might find out certain things about the person that we didn't know until we looked at the colour interior and vice versa.

Cheryl Fleming

- Par exemple le portrait de Cheryl Fleming qui fait voir une femme d'allure innocente appuyee sur une bibliotheque dont les tablettes sont occupees par une collection de poupees. Symbolisme de renforcement. Dans l'interieur a cote, un graphique rose, jaune et bleu parcour le mur, un divan de velours rose languit dans le centre de la piece, des plantes s'epanouissent. Le portrait est en contradiction avec les lieux qui l'illuminent. L'innocence s'evanouit, alors que la jupe fendue s'ouvre de plus en plus sur la jambe.

Mark and Christine Fowler

Raymond Pharaud

- Sur un autre plan, ce changement existe a l'egard de l'activite physique du photographe. Dans la plupart des images doubles, on decouvre entre le portrait et l'interieur, un rappel visible: le coin d'une chaise, un telephone, le bout d'une peinture. Ces indices visuels reapparaissent dans l'interieur en couleur leur position par rapport au cadre change, leur ton s'amplifie par la couleur. Ce changement dans le temps et l'espace traduit l'activite du photographe et les moments du portrait et de l'interieurs.



Gabor Szilasi January 19. Side 3. (Tape 2 Side B)

000 : G.S. Very little of it. I'm just sticking with this for the time being. What I'm also trying is different ways of presenting photos by mounting. For this exhibition, I try to do an indentation in the hawaii board and drymount the photos in that indentation which.. I got the idea from Jim Dine/Friedlander cooperation and I sort of like that. And since I'm using 2 photographs on the same mat, a cut-out mat an overmat might be a bit too fussy because the pictures are fairly close. I don't know. Anyway it's less work. Of course I have to pay to have the indentation made because I have to ask the printer to do it. But I think it looks quite good. So I'll try that. I still have to get in touch with the fellow at Ryerson because my prints are sort of an off size. I don't know if they'll agree to that or not. So there are all sorts of problems.

KT Could I take a look at those. Do you have some here now - the pairs.

G.S. Well, no the one I had. I don't know if you saw it at Vaguna. When Michiko moved they had a group show and that's one thing that sort of encouraged me very much is that Jim Bercoman bought it right away those two. So I don't have it. I only have contact prints of some of the colour. Some of them will be shown - ~~some~~ they are 4x5 - some of them will be in a square size, they will be cropped. I can't really show you enlargements right now.

KT. Do you think your work will always be with 4x5. Are you committed to that quality of image that you get from a 4x5.

G.S. No, not really so much that in this pack of images, the portraits are done on 2 1/4 and the interiors 4x5. So even within the same frame I'm using 2 different sizes. I think that one should use the ~~best~~ format the subject matter needs, demands. I've done portraits for years on 4x5 and now I hope to be freer. I still put the 2 1/4 on a tripod, but since you don't have all the business of black cloth and holders and all that, I can just move with the 2 1/4 + a small tripod very quickly wherever I want to. Or if there's enough light I just do it hand held. The reason I'm not using 35mm for the portraits ... is because I thought the quality would be quite different. 35mm being so grainy + shallow. Whereas the 2 1/4 x 4x5 are compatible in terms of size. But then I thought that maybe to show this juxtaposition, this contrast even more, maybe I should do the portraits on 35mm and have them fuzzy and grainy and then a very crisp, very <sup>precise</sup> sharp colour print. Why not? So that will probably be the next thing.

Right now I'm just doing the portraits in 2 1/4. Something else which I don't know if you wanted to talk about but which we can talk about is the question of grants. Whether government support is a good thing for the artist or not. I had 2 short term grants and a year grant - what do you call it, the big grant

K.T. The senior arts grant?

G.S. Yes. And I feel that for me I don't think a grant where you're paid only to photograph and <sup>do</sup> maybe the odd freelance work on the side, that it necessarily for every artist is the best way to function. I find that to do my own photography, combined with other things, everyday life, as long as I do it in the city, it works out fine. When I am working on these or it happened with



other projects, with this series of photographs, I just call people and I make appointments and it's part of my everyday life. You know I don't really feel the need to have 6 months off to do this project. Or if I had, I wouldn't necessarily do more of it or less of it. The problem is different if your photography takes you in far away places, like if you have to travel then of course you have to have time off. But I think you know I would prefer to do my own photography as part of my everyday routine. It's a healthier thing.

K.T. That may also be personal. Some people can't seem to juggle working and daily life and doing their own work. And they may need the time to say OK now I have an income and now I'm going to do my own work. Some people may think they want to do it that way, but find out they can't because they can't work without some sort of structure. There are many attitudes towards it. I'm not sure whether I agree, whether it's a good or bad thing.

G.S. No No I'm don't think.. I said what works for me. But I'm quite sure if for some reason I like to photograph in Italy for 6 months, well the only way ... at least I would have to take off time from teaching and find some way surviving. Well that's happens.. well what I've seen. I've written so many letters of recommendation for Quebec grants or CC grants. And when I look at the work, what they've done during the 3 months or year, it isn't necessarily that much better than what they've done the year before. So I guess, an artist might even use the year for relaxing and can do a fantastic production the year



after. Everybody functions differently.

K.T. I just wanted to ask you a question. The people whose portraits you take - are they friends, are they well known people are they unknown people?

G.S. Most of them are unknown people. The ones I am doing now, they are more or less acquaintances, they are not strangers. It happens occasionally that I meet someone, a couple. It just happened that I met a couple, an older couple at someone's place up in St. Sauveur. We got on really well.

And I find them very interesting, very original couple and I'm going to photograph them. I haven't known them before, but that's the exception.

I don't necessarily and as a matter of fact I almost always try to avoid doing well known people. I don't want to <sup>base</sup> ~~base~~ my purpose or the interest or success of my pictures on the person being well known.

Because what happens very often if you see a photog. of a very well known person, the myth behind the person obscures the actual value of the photograph. You find it as an excellent photog. because

you can see a picture of maybe someone very seldom photographed. So and that happens very often. Some photographs are based on the fame, recognition of the subject. I'm trying to photog. just ordinary people. They are people

who I know, whom I find interesting. Some of them might have some reputation, but maybe just very local. You know, like I decided to

photo Sam, Sam Tata. Well, of course, in Toronto everybody will know that it's Sam Tata. But if that photo is shown somewhere else, not in a photo

circle, then nobody will know who Sam Tata is. I'm just trying to photog.

just ordinary people. Because there are interesting people everywhere. I think



its important in the case of Sam and some others. I have known them so long and they are very dear to me and I want to photog. them.

K.T. Do you come up with a different type of image, given your closeness to a person. In other words, if your very close to a person, if you know a person very well, do you get a photographic image which is closer to that person, closer to the character of that person?

G.S. I think so. You know how it is with a complete stranger if you are on the same wavelength, this rapport might happen in a matter of seconds or minutes, or after 10 minutes and then someone you've known for years but he's camera shy, doesn't like to be photog. Someone you know really well but it might take 3 or 4 sessions or it might not happen at all to get a photog. of his true character. I'm surprised sometimes how photog. who do portraits hate to be photog. It almost upsets me sometimes.

K.T. Do you like to be photog.?

G.S. Ya. For instance I was talking to Mary Bourdeau yesterday; Bob Bourdeau with 35mm or snapshots he doesn't mind, but in front of a view camera he can't stand it, he hates it. But then he doesn't photo people either, so I think that's fair. But a portrait photog... because you know when you photog somebody, its an exploitation in a way. That portrait photog didn't agree or hates to be photog., I think the photog. should put himself in the place of the subject, have this big thing on a tripod with a black cloth. But it can be a traumatic experience.

K.T. Maybe that's why the photog who doesn't ..... end.

GABOR SZILASI January 19 Side 2. (Tape 2 Side A 1st  $\frac{3}{4}$  tape empty)

117.: G.S. They do go thru all sorts of different phases

K.T. Of course you will ~~already~~ always run into the argument that its not homogeneous, its not together. But theres also a point where it can become very safe if you make it with one type of work and it never changes because you know that thats your ticket. But this new work thats coming out.

G.S. The portraits and interiors

K.T. Is that sufficiently holding your interest?—to explore it further in a sense?

G.S. Ya I think so. I think it interests me so much now that I cant do enough of it. And it might end up with, I dont know, all sorts of crazy things. Maybe in a year I'll go to the colour portraits which I'm so wildly against now. Or maybe it will be the reverse. I'll do black and white interiors and colour portraits, completely senseless. No. I want to say that once we start exploring something then the change, an evolution comes by itself without really pushing it. Because if you do a large number of photographs of something then a change will occur. Which might be simply, you might use still the same technique or the same film, or to stick with B+W and the same format, but your picture plane will change, the way the surface is organized will change. I think if it doesnt change, then you have to get worried. I might just mention, that if photography becomes too easy then you have to start asking questions.

K.T. what about the effect of working in pairs? Do you see potential for that



other than the way you're doing it now?

G.S. Something I was thinking off, once you start working in pairs, it is already a step away from the singular image and a step towards the sequence. So if its 2 then you know, it might be 3 and it can change to something different. No. right now, I can see only the pairs of images. I'm not trying to think at this stage of what I'm going to do after.

END.